

4 May 2009

**Statement of Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann,
President of the 63rd Session of the General Assembly,
at the Secretary-General's Briefing on the outbreak of Influenza A**

Excellencies,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Madame Deputy Secretary-General
Madame Director General of the World Health Organization,
Friends All,

I am very pleased to have Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Dr. Margaret Chan, Director-General of WHO, joining us by video conference from Geneva, to brief us on the response of the United Nations system to the outbreak of swine influenza A. This outbreak and threatening pandemic are a focus of media attention and public concern. It is reassuring that the United Nations system, taking its lead from the World Health Organization, is responding vigorously and effectively to the multi-faceted challenges of influenza A. This is, of course, the leadership and coordination that the world expects of the United Nations in these difficult times.

The UN is drawing on the valuable lessons learned from previous epidemics, most recently the threat of the avian flu pandemic. Working closely with governments and non-governmental organizations, I am confident that we can address this lethal threat with skill and balance, despite its uncertain and ever-changing characteristics.

Our challenge remains one of better coordination in our response. I understand the Secretary-General will point to important advances that are being made in this regard.

Our response must be swift but measured. Our messages should be clear and fact-based. We must avoid over-reaction that will disrupt lives even further in these times already fraught with serious problems affecting virtually all nations.

And we should listen carefully to the recommendations and concerns of Member States. The UN must always focus its attention on the most vulnerable populations that do not have ready access to information and treatment and assist their governments accordingly.

It is also essential that the work of the UN, especially those offices working on our response to the potential pandemic itself, not be disrupted. We must be there to respond to this problem and so many other urgent needs. The UN system itself has prepared contingency plans in case of a broader pandemic. The staff of the Secretariat and of the Security Council have developed alternative work

plans; and I am requesting that similar arrangements are made to ensure that the important work of the General Assembly continues unhindered.

Influenza A is yet another unwelcome challenge that is reminding us of our vulnerabilities. Let us confront it with calm, coherence, coordination and cooperation. Let us move swiftly and assuredly to ensure these principles are applied around the world.

Mr. Secretary-General, you have the floor.